

**BOARD OF REGENTS
FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
WORK SESSION MINUTES**

**Thursday, November 19, 2009
11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.**

**The Rhode Island Department of Education – Shepard Building
5th Floor – Peter McWalters Conference Room
255 Westminster Street – Providence, RI 02903**

Chairman Flanders announced that because of the length of the agenda, the Executive Session and Commissioner's Comments agenda items would be deferred until the next meeting of the Board.

RTTT/Strategic Planning

Commissioner Gist reported to the Board that the Race to the Top application is out and proposals are due January 19, 2010. She also reported that she had participated in a panel on Race to the Top on Monday and that Rhode Island is a "State to Watch." The Commissioner also reported that there are five RTTT forums being scheduled, two of which have already been held – Warren and the Northern Collaborative. There were approximately 100 people attending each.

Next, the Commissioner reported on strategic planning as follows: The Regents have seen a preliminary version of the plan as part of discussions of the Commissioner's evaluation. She said that the draft being distributed is a near-final draft, and the plan is to have the final version ready for public release at the next Regents' meeting on December 3, 2009. Ms. Gist emphasized that the Strategic Plan is "not a sacred text;" rather it is a prediction of what needs to be done to focus the work to transform education in Rhode Island.

Over time, the plan will be modified based on updated information. She reminded the members of the Board that the vision statements drafted in September with the Regents have been the foundation for creating objectives and strategies. Input from ongoing dialogue with Regents, RIDE staff, results of district and school visits, review of research, and examination of the Urban Task Force recommendations have helped shape the objectives and the strategies. Prior to finalizing the strategic plan, narrative text will provide the context for each priority as well as set out the vision that is held for transforming education in Rhode Island.

Ms. Gist also reminded the Board that all of the objectives and strategies have been developed to indicate what RIDE can be expected to carry out under its primary functions that are specified in the Basic Education Program: (1) create standards and expectations, (2) build capacity, (3) provide quality assurance, and (4) leverage innovation and partnerships. All of the measures contained in the draft plan are being revisited and a rationale for the measures is being drafted. These measures are being examined against Race to the Top as well as the requirements in the ARRA State Stabilization Fund.

The strategic plan is a blueprint to focus RIDE's work in transformation. Once it is finalized, it will be used to build detailed work plans that will contain specific responsibilities and target

dates for completion. The work will then be sequenced in terms of start dates and anticipated end dates. Currently the draft contains 36 strategies that will require resourcing, time, and effort to carry out. Everyone in the agency is committed to moving this work forward collectively; however, some work will require more resources, time, and effort to carry out.

Review and Discussion FY 2011 Budget and FY 2010 Revised Budget

Commissioner Gist reviewed the FY 2011 budget submission, as attached. She talked about the FY 2010 enacted budget total - \$1.15 billion; the FY2010 revised budget total - \$1.19 billion; and the FY 2011 budget request - \$1.19 billion. She then reviewed, in detail, the FY 2011 General Revenue Summary as follows:

- Total budget is \$884.2 million;
- Provides an overall increase of 3%, or \$26.5 million, over the FY 2010 enacted budget;
- Provides a \$6.3 million increase in education funding to offset the equivalent decrease in federal stabilization funds;
- Allows for a \$1.3 million increase to Central Falls;
- Includes \$7.3 million to accommodate increase in growth and other data updates for charter schools;
- Increases school construction aid projections by \$10.2 million for projects scheduled for June 30, 2010 completion;
- Reduces the department's budget by \$0.9 million and includes small increases for Davies, Met, and Deaf;
- State budget office will reduce personnel costs by an additional \$0.5 million related to a 50% decrease in the COLA and pay reduction days; and
- Increases teacher retirement by \$1.5 million.

The Commissioner then reviewed the budgets for the Rhode Island School for the Deaf, the Davies Career & Technical School, the Metropolitan Career and Technical School, and the Central Falls School District, along with the FY 2011 Education Aid Proposal of \$636.2 million, which is a \$10.7 million increase from FY 2010. Commissioner Gist also talked about the FY 2011 Housing Aid Proposal of \$71.8 million, an increase of \$10.2 million from FY 2010 and the Department of Education budget, which allows for the Regents to invest in the five strategic priorities of the "Transforming RI Education" strategic plan.

Funding Formula

Commissioner Gist told the group that the objective of the funding formula proposal is to develop language and specific calculations to assist in the development of an education funding formula proposal that may be introduced in the next legislative session. The work will be aligned to the Regents' guiding principles and apply equitably to all public schools and school districts with a "money follows the student" methodology. The department will determine what "ought to be" by costing out the Basic Education Program (BEP) so that the foundation per pupil and the student need factor are linked to the cost-effective delivery of an education system, i.e., the use of a "market basket" approach to establish cost benchmarks that will be used to create the foundation per pupil. The department will research best practices to ensure that cost standards are aligned to the delivery of the BEP and to ensure that funding for high-need students and high-cost programs are incorporated into the distribution. A final proposal will create a system that better prepares the department to integrate cost standards, best practices, and fiscal accountability systems to align resources toward improved student outcomes. The final language and calculations will be ready for the Regents' approval on February 4, 2010.

Review and Discussion of Educator Code of Responsibility and Educator Evaluation Standards

First, Commissioner Gist reviewed the recommendations for changes to the Code of Professional Development. She reviewed, in detail, the concerns that had been expressed at the public hearings, as follow:

- The Code appears to be applicable to both employment and certification decisions. As a result it seems to conflate evaluation and certification. Several individuals did not view this as an appropriate use of the Code. Others saw duplication between the Code and the Evaluation Standards. At least one individual asked how the two might be combined or linked.
- The most frequently asked questions related to how the Code will be used and how educators will be held accountable.
- Some individuals questioned whether or not ethics belonged in the Code.
- Several individuals applauded the establishment of a RI Code of Professional Responsibility for the profession.
- One person suggested a code be prepared for parent responsibility as well.
- Concerns were raised about the potential for costly litigation that will result from the implementation of the Code.

The Commissioner then walked the group through the recommended changes to the document as per the public hearings, as attached. The group questioned the proposed language to Standard 3, Bullet 5 – “Support colleagues in developing and maintaining a work environment that is free of coercion and that allows all educators to maintain their individual professional integrity.” The group expressed concerns about the recommended changes to the language, i.e., “Support colleagues in developing and maintaining a work environment that allows all educators to maintain their individual professional integrity free of pressure to act in ways that are designed to disrupt student learning.” The group talked about changing the phrase “designed to disrupt student learning” to “that are not in the best interest of students.” Staff will work on final changes.

Regents also discussed Standard 5, Bullet 4 – “Accept only those assignments for which they are professionally qualified and hold appropriate certification.” The proposed change, “Accept only those assignments for which they are professionally qualified and hold appropriate certification, unless the district has secured prior approval from RIDE.” Members of the Regents expressed concern that teachers could be caught between not wanting to take a teaching assignment because of their lack of qualification and being told by the administration that they had to take the assignment or possibly lose their job. Staff will work on editing this change. Approval of this item will be brought back to the Regents on December 3, 2009.

Commissioner Gist also reviewed the issues regarding educator evaluations that were raised by individuals at the public hearings, as follow:

- Many districts already have strong evaluation systems that meet most of the proposed standards. Concerns were raised about whether these existing systems would have to be replaced by a state model.
- Several individuals asked that the standards not lose sight of the importance of using evaluations to help educators improve.
- KIDSCount noted that research supports many of the expectations articulated in the draft standards.

- Funding concerns were raised, especially as they relate to needed professional development, the training of evaluators, and the resources needed if annual observations are required.
- Several individuals noted that the RIFTHP recently received a grant to work with four districts on the development of an evaluation system.
- The assurance of quality educator evaluation in ALL districts was noted as an equity concern to assure that every student has access to effective educators.
- It was noted that although some districts have evaluation systems described on paper, in practice the implementation is not always evident.
- The inclusion of Support Professionals in the expectation of evaluation systems was supported.
- Questions were asked about the specifics of “intensive support and evaluation” for some educators.
- Several individuals asked who will serve as evaluators.
- Issues were raised about how bias will be avoided in the evaluations.

The Commissioner then reviewed the proposed changes to the language, as attached. This item will be brought back for approval on December 3, 2009.

Adjournment

With unanimous consent, the meeting adjourned at 1:25 p.m.